

# Lifestyle Tips



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## Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour in the Early Years

Little kids seem to have plenty of energy (just ask anyone who has a young child to keep up with!) But that doesn't mean they're getting enough physical activity. In order to get a healthy start in life, children four and under need to move more and sit less. Unfortunately, research shows that many kids are on the path to inactivity before they even begin school.

Kids need the time and opportunity to learn how to move—it will help them grow and develop to their fullest. Here are some tips on how to increase physical activity and decrease sedentary behaviour in the early years. Remember, you are the most important role model in your child's life. By getting active with your child, you are teaching them healthy habits that will set the stage for a long and healthy life.

### Move Any Way, Every Day

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines say that kids under one year should be physically active several times daily, particularly through interactive floor-based activities, such as tummy time, reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling and crawling. Children aged one to four require at least 180 minutes



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of physical activity at any intensity throughout the day, including a variety of activities in different environments, such as climbing stairs, playing, walking, running or dancing. Try these tips:

- Create safe spaces for play—you don't need a whole playroom, a safe area with toys and balls will do.
- Play music and learn action songs together—many kids love dancing, clapping and mimicking actions.
- Dress for the weather and explore the outdoors—if you're ready to face the elements, even a patch of snow can be your playground.
- Make time for play with other kids—play dates, music or sports groups and the park are great spots to get together with other kids.
- Get where you're going by walking or biking—try leaving the car or stroller at home when you can.

### Cut Down on Sitting Down

The Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines say that kids four and under should spend no more than one hour at a time sitting or reclining (e.g. in a stroller, high chair or car seat). Plus, screen time is not recommended for children under the age of two, and should be limited to less than an hour per day for children two to four. Try these tips:

- Limit use of playpens and infant seats when baby is awake – great in a pinch, but not as a practice.
- Explore and play with your child—try getting down on the floor at his or her level.
- Stop during long car trips for playtime—you will all benefit from the chance to stretch your legs.
- Set limits and have rules about screen time—let your child pick one or two shows or games.
- Keep TVs and computers out of bedrooms—out of sight, out of mind
- Take children outside every day—foster a love of the outdoors and an active life might follow.

You can put young kids on the path to healthy growth and development by helping them move more and sit less! For more information on the Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years (0-4 years), please visit (Insert ParticipACTION and CSEP links).

To view the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for the Early Years information sheet, please click here.

To view the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years information sheet, please click here.

